

Research on Analysis and Optimization Path of International Communication on Official Websites of Local Cities' Culture and Tourism

-- Based on the Comparison of Hengyang and Sanya

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Abstract

With the digital globalization and China's cultural "going out" strategy, the official website of urban culture and tourism, as the primary gateway of international communication and the key information source of tourism decision-making, have a direct impact on the attractiveness and competitiveness of cities on the global stage. Selecting Hengyang City and Sanya City as typical cases, through systematic multi-dimensional comparison, this paper reveals the differences in multilingual services and international communication efficiency of official websites of cultural tourism in different types of cities. It also analyzes the underlying reasons and puts forward the optimization path which is both universal and inclusive of differences.

Keywords

International communication; local cities; official website of culture and tourism; multilingual services; Hengyang; Sanya.

1. Introduction

With the globalization and deep interweaving of digital technology, the international image construction and communication mode of cities are undergoing unprecedented profound changes[4]. The official website of culture and tourism has gone far beyond the basic function of information issuance as well as the platform for urban resources[5]. It is a main source for international tourists to obtain information and make travel decisions, increasingly becoming an "online window" for a city to show its unique cultural charm and transmit cultural values to the world[1] [6]. However, from the current situation of the construction of cultural and tourism official websites in Chinese cities, especially in minor cities, there are widespread problems of level differences and uneven development[3]. Some key tourism cities have approached or reached the international level, but more inland cities still face severe challenges in the internationalization and international communication efficiency of their official websites of culture and tourism[2].

Sanya is the benchmark of China's tropical coastal vacation tourism, with highly international tourist sources and significant market driven characteristics. Hengyang, as an important historical and cultural inland city, has profound cultural and tourism resources, but its international market development is still in the exploratory stage. The intuitive and strong contrast between the two cities' official websites of culture and tourism in terms of positioning, visual presentation, content organization and functional design reflects the profound distinction between historical and cultural cities and international tourism cities in terms of international communication. Through a systematic and in-depth comparison of the two cities' official websites of culture and tourism, this paper analyzes the specific manifestations, core problems and causes of their differences, and then provides differentiated strategies for solving

the dilemma of local cities' official websites of culture and tourism in international communication.

2. Differences of International Communication on Local Cities' Official Websites of Culture and Tourism

Sanya's official website of culture and tourism shows mature international operation thinking. Its positioning is clearly defined as the "official website of tourism development"[7] serving international tourists, and its design strictly follows the marketing logic of commerce. Its core advantage is reflected in the "user experience" as the center, so the content system adopts the theme classification in line with the habits of international tourists' planning, such as the *Experience* section. The use of "marketing" and "experiential" narrative language, such as "*Live like an Islander*", can effectively stimulate emotional resonance, supplemented by modern and dynamic visual design and diversified interactive functions, such as multilingual intelligent customer service and social media matrix. In contrast, the official website of Hengyang culture and tourism shows a strong image of "government information publication", which is positioned as the "official website of the government department". Its content structure is centered on resource attributes or administrative classification. The narrative language is mostly declarative literal translation, and the visual presentation is traditional and plain. The interactive functions and multilingual support are obviously not efficient, so the response is not relatively quick for the needs of international users.

2.1. Differences in Website Positioning

Sanya's official website of culture and tourism is an independent "official website for touristic development", so the core is commercial marketing. The design of the platform, including content organization and visual presentation, has the orientation of "touristic consumption promotion" and "international tourists serving" [7], which means that the mechanism and content production are directly made by the feedback of the market or international tourists. The operation team is market optimized, so the product (the portal) tends to be a commercial brand.

In contrast, Hengyang's official website is settled as the one for the government's culture and tourism information releaser, which is hidden in the framework of its deep inside. Its primary function is to perform disclose government information and release culture. As a result, its content is inevitably showed as government notices, policies, regulations, cultural activities and tourism resources, which is administrative rather than user friendliness. When the logic focuses on "information", it is difficult for the website to be designed according to the end users' experience. It is more inclined to display cultural and tourism information as a part of the results of government work, rather than packaging and marketing as a marketable and experiential tourism product. This fundamental difference in positioning is the source of all subsequent dimensional differences.

2.2. Differences in Communication Concepts

The difference in communication idea is directly and profoundly reflected in the content organization and narrative strategy of the website. Sanya's official website adopts highly "user-centric" information architecture. It has clear navigation design logic. For example, under the "*Experience*" section, it is further subdivided into "*Beaches & Islands*" [7], "*Romance & Honeymoon*" [7], and "*Family Fun*" [7], which fully fits the thinking mode and psychological expectation of international tourists when planning their vacation trip. Users can intuitively find customized content that meets their travel motivation, such as family travel or honeymoon trip, and the information acquisition path is efficient and natural. This is a market proven and commercialized information classification rule.

The information architecture of Hengyang official website is characterized by “centering on resource attributes or administrative classification”. The page layout is usually in the form of “article list”, and the content is arranged in reverse order according to the release time, or is simply classified according to the labels such as “*Eight Scenic Spots*”[8], “*Food Recommendations*”, etc. This structure is similar to the directory or internal resource list of the government work report. International tourists are used to active exploration, if they cannot find out what they need, the destination is lack of attraction. This reflects that its content organization thinking of Hengyang is still managing internal resources, rather than external ones.

“Marketing” and “experiential” languages are used in the narration of Sanya’s official website, including “the Blue of 18° North” and “Live like an Islander”. Such statements aim to create a sense of relaxation and a unique life of imagination, rather than the pale description of scenes, to trigger the emotional resonance and identity of potential international tourists. This is a mature brand identity strategy, behind which is a skillful use of the consumer psychology in the international tourism market.

In contrast, “declarative” and “expository” language strategy is used in the English version of Hengyang’s official website. Literal strategy is used in the translation of scenic spot names, historical data and geographical features. As for “Yueping Park” [8], the text focuses on the listing and plain narration of the facts, lacking the necessary foreshadowing of the cultural background, the deliberate rendering of the emotional atmosphere and the fascinating story guidance. Although this strategy ensures the “accuracy” of information, it has lost “attractiveness” and “appeal”, so it is more difficult to stimulate the desire of international users for in-depth understanding and on-site visits.

2.3. Differences in Content Depth

“Experience guidance” in the content construction of Sanya’s official website is the core. The introduction of a beach is not restricted in the length, sand quality and other data, but focuses on describing and participating in the activities such as surfing, diving and sunbathing, emphasizing the sensory enjoyment and relaxation experience[7]. In terms of visual presentation, the accompanying pictures are not only in large number, but also of high quality. They are saturated in color and exquisite in composition, often accompanied by high-definition video dynamic display. They are closely combined with dynamic and attractive texts and videos. The content of Hengyang official website is more like “basic information listing”. For a historical site, the introduction may focus on objective information such as its construction time, architectural style, or historical status. This information has its value, but it is not the way to attract international tourists who lack the corresponding cultural background. In terms of visual presentation, the use of pictures is relatively conservative, with low proportion and relatively traditional and plain style. Most of them are static displays of landscapes or buildings, lacking dynamic and life-oriented scene capture, and the overall visual impact and immersion are not very strong.

2.4. Differences in Users’ Perception

The visual aesthetics of Sanya’s official website reflects a high degree of modernity and professionalism: a large number of blank spaces are used to create a sense of breathing. The home page often uses full screen high-definition video or large rotating pictures as the visual focus. The photography style is fashionable, the colors are bright, and the video production is excellent and dynamic. This visual language is highly consistent with its brand image of “tropical vacation paradise” [7], which can catch the eye of users at the first sight and transmit high-quality sensory signals.

The visual design of Hengyang official website is relatively traditional: the layout is relatively compact, the text information is dense, the picture size is small and the style is documentary, and the video content may be relatively flat in shooting techniques and editing rhythm. The overall impression is closer to the traditional government information portal. The primary goal of its visual rhetoric is to clearly convey information, rather than actively create brand emotion and aesthetic experience.

2.5. Differences in Human-Computer Interaction

Sanya's official website shows a high degree of maturity in the technical implementation of multilingual services. Its multilingual intelligent customer service, named "Ye Boo" [7], meets the basic consulting needs and reduces the obstacles that international users may encounter in the search of information. The website conspicuously integrates international mainstream social media matrix links, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc, and encourages users to connect through "Follow Us", which helps to transform official website traffic into social media fans and expand communication channels and users' interaction space. The multi-language switching mechanism, with 8 languages, smooth and intuitive is usually located at the top of the page in a fixed position, with a coherent user experience.

Hengyang's official website has obvious shortcomings in terms of interactive functions. Firstly, the lack of real-time interactive tools, such as intelligent customer service or online consultation windows, means that users cannot get instant help when they encounter questions, and can only explore by themselves through static FAQ pages or contact information, which greatly reduces the smoothness of experience. Secondly, the website is not effectively connected with international social media, which means it is still not in the main channel of international communication, so that will limit the secondary dissemination of the information and the potential construction of international communities. It only has two lingual supports, Chinese and English, so the users may not have smooth experience. The design and location of the search box is also conventional, sometimes even not integrated with the overall page layout or design style.

2.6. Differences in Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Sanya's official website of culture and tourism shows a significant international tendency in languages. It provides 8 languages online, including but not limiting to English, Japanese, Korean, and Russian, forming a relatively complete language matrix. More importantly, its translation strategies are not only literal but free translation or cultural adaptation. For example, in the description of local unique activities or landscapes, rhetorical devices and expressions are often used for the reading habits of target-language readers. Localization is achieved to avoid pure literal translation, and reproduction is used to retain the original idea, for the enhancement of readability and attractiveness of the text. In its "Culture" section, local ethnic cultural elements, such as their traditional costumes, festival activities and handicrafts, are systematically introduced, including Li Nationality and Miao Nationality[7]. This strategy reflects that the translation takes international tourists' traditional habits and beauty preferences into consideration, aiming to reduce the cultural difference and improve the efficiency of information reception. Of course, there is still a long way to go in the culture interpretation, historical origin and spiritual connotation.

In contrast, the bilingual support of Hengyang culture and tourism official website is limited to narrow scale of international tourists, and literal translation is the main strategy. Proper nouns, cultural concepts and scenic spot introductions are translated word by word, with no cultural background interpretation or contextualization. As a well-known historical and cultural city, Hengyang has a profound cultural background represented by its religion of Mount Hengshan or "Nanyue"[8], the Confucianism of Shigu Academy, and the Anti-Japanese War Memorial culture. However, in its English version, these priceless cultural resources have not been

effectively transcoded or explained in the target language. The content is still describing the scenic spots or buildings, lacking the ability to transform cultural concepts into international attractions. For example, Hengshan's religion is only introduced by the name or location of temples, rather than explaining its status in Chinese religious philosophy, the significance of the religious tradition, or the unique integration of four main religions. For Shigu Academy, its introduction focuses on historical data like the history of architectures, but fails to reveal its cultural and symbolic significance as an ancient academic center and its relationship with the development of Neo Confucianism. Although this translation can satisfy the accuracy need of information, it cannot compensate the loss of cultural images or obstacles to understanding. The misunderstandings greatly reduce the value of cultural resources in language transmission, so it is difficult to trigger the emotional resonance and deep cognition of international tourists.

3. Analysis of Problems and Causes

The above-mentioned problems need to be analyzed in the way of urban development models and official website operation. The most fundamental difference is the driving force. The construction and optimization of Sanya's cultural and tourism official website are directly driven by market competition and tourists' demand. In the highly internationalized tourism market, its official website is essentially a key digital asset for participating in global competition, with the international benchmarks of first-class standards, including Visit California or Tourism Australia, which can directly attract or lure high-value international tourists. This market mechanism forces Sanya's official website to continuously focus on end users' experience, cutting-edge technology, and brand marketing effectiveness. In contrast, the construction and maintenance of Hengyang Culture and Tourism Official Website are more driven by the administrative policies or cultural promotion. As an online platform for government departments, its primary function is to fulfill administrative responsibilities such as government information disclosure, policy release, and promotion of work dynamics. The international dissemination of cultural and tourism is often seen as an additional function. This driving logic leads to a tendency for official website construction to lean towards "information publication" rather than "communication effectiveness". In the term of resource allocation and, the demand of international tourists is not the priority.

Secondly, the most direct reason is the difference in financial resource and professionalism. As an economic hub of China's tourism industry, Sanya's total tourism revenue contributes greatly to the local GDP, which determines that the local government or relevant operating agencies have sufficient budget to invest in the continuous development and upgrading of the official website. These investments make it possible to establish and maintain a specialized operations team, ensuring the professionalism of the official website in terms of products, content, and operations. However, the culture and tourism industry in Hengyang is still in a period of transformation from domestic to international expansion. The operation of the official website may face limited budget and tight manpower. The team composition may be mainly composed of administrative or technical personnel, lacking professional cross-cultural communication or digital product operation talents, so the official website still remains not as an operator or brand builder for international users, but as an information issuer.

Finally, differences in target audience awareness fundamentally affect the overall positioning and content strategy of the official website. Sanya has always regarded "international tourists" as its clearly primary service target on its official website. This audience portrait runs through the entire process of website planning, design, content production, and feature development, so all decisions revolve around how to better serve this group, reaching a highly focused and consistent communication. The official website of Hengyang is facing the dilemma of relatively vague target audience. Its official website needs to serve domestic citizens or tourists

(searching for government information, understanding local culture), and potential international visitors. This positioning of “taking multiple parties into account” can easily lead to an imbalance of focus in practice. In order to meet administrative requirements (for domestic citizens), it sacrifices the experience of international users including information that does not conform to international customs, ultimately resulting in unclear positioning of the official website and the inability to form the best experience among any single user group. As a result, the effectiveness of its international communication is diluted and weakened.

4. Optimization Strategy and Differentiated Communication Path Construction

In response to the core issues identified above, optimizing the multilingual services and international communication capabilities of local city cultural and tourism official websites should follow the principle of “layered and universal, tailored to local conditions”. The universal optimization strategy provides a fundamental improvement framework and operational guide for various cities, while the differentiated communication path needs to be accurately designed and implemented based on the city’s resource endowment and market positioning.

4.1. Content Precision

In order to achieve preciseness, it is critical to establish and continuously maintain a dynamically updated database of “culture and terminologies”, including terms of attractions, festivals, historical events, celebrities, intangible cultural heritage, etc., as well as their multi-dimensional meanings and related backgrounds in cross-cultural contexts. For example, as for “Heng Shan”, the terminology database should not only provide the corresponding literal translation of “Mount Heng”, but also clarify its religious and cultural significance as one of the Five Sacred Mountains (including Taoist caves, blessed places of Christians, and important Buddhist Temples), its natural landscape features (including the unique meteorological wonder of “Zhurong Peak”), as well as related historical allusions or literary poetries. Based on the above, the translation of official website content should adopt the strategy of “explanation or interpretation”, which means contextual annotations, historical backgrounds, cultural associations, or comparative explanations. This strategy aims to reconstruct the framework of the source culture for target language readers rather than simple language conversion. For example, when introducing the “Shigu Academy” in Hengyang, one should not only focus on the translation of the name “Shigu Academy” and the general classification of “one of the four great ancient academies”, but also add its carrier of the important event in Chinese academic history, “Zhu Zhang Hui Jiao”, and point out its key role in the dissemination and development of Song and Ming Dynasty Neo Confucianism. Then international readers or tourist can understand or be interested in the context.

4.2. Technical Function Enhancement

On the one hand, it is necessary to fully deploy responsive web design to ensure that the official website can provide a reasonable layout, comfortable reading, and fully functional browsing experience on different sizes of terminal devices, which is a basic requirement of the mobile era. On the other hand, actively introducing cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence can greatly improve the efficiency and quality of multilingual services. For example, deploying AI assisted translation engines on the basis of professional manual proofreading to process massive and real-time dynamic information (such as news, announcements, social media updates) can significantly shorten the time lag for publishing multilingual content. At the same time, the introduction of multilingual intelligent customer service robots can respond to common questions from international tourists about transportation, ticketing, opening hours, emergency assistance, etc. It can provide personalized itinerary suggestions and effectively

compensating for the shortcomings and time limitations of manual customer service, 24 hours a day, 7 day a week.

4.3. Demand Driven from “Supply Orientation” to “User Orientation”

Firstly, by deploying website analysis tools such as Google Analytics, we can gain in-depth insights into the behavior data of international users, including but not limited to visit sources, popular pages, staying duration, bounce rate, and search keywords, etc. These data can clearly reveal users' interests, obstacles in the information search path, and potential content needs. Secondly, on the basis of data insights, we can improve information organization and navigation design. For example, if the data shows searches for “family-friendly activities” by international users, the “Family Travel” section should be added or strengthened in the navigation bar, and the relevant content should be organized according to the international tourists' travel planning (such as age, interests, and duration in China), rather than simply listing natural resources. Finally, we can establish a multilingual users' feedback system. Easy-to-use multilingual feedback should be set up clearly on the website, either at the bottom of the page view or the end of the booking process, to encourage international users to give suggestions through emails, social medias, or other channels. More importantly, it is necessary to establish a cycled process to regularly analyze feedbacks, make optimization, implement improvements, and inform end users, so that the official website can respond quickly to the need of users.

4.4. Brand Recognition from “Information Releasing” to “Emotion Connecting”

The international communication should shift from providing facts to telling brand stories that can build brand recognition. The language needs to go beyond plain narration, but use visually appealing expressions, guided by touristic values. For example, the narration of Sanya may go deep into the philosophy of “Island Life”, rather than just staying at the sunny beaches. Hengyang can build a spiritual hometown through ancient and modern times, to inspire thinking around the topic of “Millennium Historical Culture and Anti-Japanese War Monument”. In content presentation, investment should be made heavily in producing high-quality multilingual short videos, 360-degree panoramic or virtual reality (VR) guides, interactive story maps, or other immersive contents. Short videos need to have cinematic visual quality or narrative rhythm, conveying the atmosphere and unique experience of the destination. Interactive maps can integrate geographic information, historical and cultural annotations, users' participation and sharing, allowing users to deepen their understanding through exploration. These immersive contents can not only vividly show the destination's scenery, but also stimulate users' imagination, which is an effective means to enhance brand attractiveness and cultural memory.

4.5. Differentiated Transmission Path

The advantages of a “Sanya style” city are its mature touristic market and distinctive vacation destination, so the official website should deepen the aim of “Sensory Experience and Lifestyle Marketing”. The positioning of the official website should be comprehensively upgraded from a “tourism information portal” to a global tourism E-commerce marketing platform. In the functionality, it is necessary to deeply integrate booking of hotels, air tickets, local tours, and performance tickets, providing a complete experience of “searching, comparing, booking, and confirming”. At the same time, users-generated content should be actively aggregated from platforms including Tripadvisor and Instagram, in real tourists' reviews, photos, and video blogs, to enhance credibility. Big data and artificial intelligence can be used to achieve personalized itinerary recommendations based on users' recommendation, including diving, food, and parent-child preferences. In brand recognition, we should continue to strengthen our high-end, fashionable, vibrant, and sustainable image, such as highlighting our top resort hotels,

innovative water sports gameplay, environmental initiatives, such as ocean conservation project etc., to establish a global brand providing products and leading an ideal lifestyle.

For the historical and cultural cities like Hengyang, its competitiveness lies in its profound and unique cultural heritage, and its official website should innovate the strategy of “cultural decoding and deep research”. The official website should shift from a “government portal” to an “online cultural museum” or a “library for deep learning”. The key is to digitally interpret and academically reproduce cultural resources. For example, themed digital exhibitions should be created, such as “Mount Heng: the Digital Exhibition of the Integration of Taoism and Buddhism” or “Hengyang Digital Memorial Hall of Anti-Japanese War”. Multi media should be used such as cultural relic images, digital documents, oral history audios, and scholars’ interpretation videos, to provide deep and accessible online cultural experience. At the same time, deep learning should be developed for international scholars, students, and cultural enthusiasts, such as providing academic references, recommending relevant researches, offering online cultural courses or lecture appointments, and launching customized study routes and reception for domestic and foreign universities. In narration, it emphasizes knowledge, inspiration, and spiritual resonance, attracting “cultural visitors” and “academic tourists” who are not satisfied with superficial sightseeing or eager to understand the historical context of the local culture.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the optimization of cultural and tourism official websites of minor cities in the future should not be limited to simply copying technical aspects like design improvement or multilingual service. More importantly, the profound self-examination and strategic positioning should be conducted based on the type of the city, whether it is a historical and cultural city or an international tourism one, so the target audience and corresponding strategies of the official website can be settled. For historical and cultural cities, the strategy focuses on achieving cultural transformation and effectiveness through creative storytelling and digital technology. For international tourism cities, the strategic focus is to achieve digital preciseness and emotional connections, as well as transforming experiential advantages into brand loyalty. This path selection is differentiated based on the cultured genes with the key to enhancing the international communication and telling the stories of minor cities in China.

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